

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES
December 4, 2008

Members Present: Daniel Clapp, Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Doris Holden, Rosemary Kofler, Kathy Koplow, Barbara Sutherland, Juana Trujillo, David Yaukey

Absent: none

Select Board Liaison, Gerry Weiss: absent

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Giovanna Mix (Program Assistant), Lisa White (Director/Senior Health Services)

Guests: Marge Babb, Shirley Packard

Welcome:

Barbara Sutherland, Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

The minutes of the November 6, 2008 meeting were approved and accepted.

Friends of Amherst Senior Center Treasurer's Report:

Doris reported that we received our certificate for solicitation from the Attorney General. We are still waiting for the 501c3 certificate. She provided a handout showing a balance of \$6,371.41 in the Checking Account; \$550 in the Stay Put Account; and \$59,581.88 in the Investment Account (down \$16,096.69 from September).

Nancy provided a handout of the 40th Anniversary Party expenses. The total was \$2,134.46. Doris reported that we received \$5,120 in donations for the 40th dinner and the publication we plan to produce.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Budget Update:

Nancy met with the Town Manager, Larry Shaffer, and Finance Director, John Musante. They went over the Senior Center budget line by line. In advance, Nancy had made the cuts needed to reach the target figure as instructed. Her proposal eliminated the Center Activities and Office Supplies line items and reduced Giovanna's hours. Nancy feared there would be even worse cuts required. The resulting discussion went better than expected however. John and Larry were concerned about Giovanna losing her benefits (as a result of working less than 20 hrs/wk) and also felt that if we gave up all of our line items the Senior Center would look like an independent agency and not a Town Department. They did support cutting out the Center Activities line item. Nancy assured Larry and John that she believes the Friends can raise adequate money to replace what was cut. While cuts in state funding could still impact the budget, Nancy was thrilled to not have to cut personnel further. Staff hours are already inadequate to meet the needs of the growing elder population. Stephanie O'Keeffe commented to Nancy later (their paths crossed by chance) that Town officials truly realize the value of the Senior Center. The 40th anniversary dinner, which Larry and John attended, she felt really helped raise awareness. The Town gets so much for the little it puts into the Senior Center. Stephanie believes that there is an understanding that cutting our services would have a deep impact on the well-being of the Town.

NEW BUSINESS

COA Member to Assist with Publicity:

Nancy suggested it would be good to have a COA member contact the local papers to get extra publicity and print feature stories about our Center and programs. She requested a volunteer. Karen faithfully sends out the weekly news to the local papers and submits a press release to Channel 22, 40, and ACTV every week.

The *Senior Spirit* news is on the Town website, but the majority of seniors do not yet use computers.

STAFF REPORTS

Senior Health Services Activity Report:

Lisa provided a handout documenting the number of client visits for November. Total individual client visits equals 584 (97 individuals) since October 2007. Lisa has sent out 70 Health Needs Assessments with the home delivered meals – 18 have been returned, 1/3 of which required follow up. Lisa arranged with the CDH/VNA to provide the follow up together. The Health Needs Assessment is the first leg of the Community Outreach Program under the CDH Grant. It starts with homebound elders.

Lisa also started a Client Survey to get feedback from the elders that visit the clinic. Initial responses are very positive. Hopefully that information will provide objective outcome measures that can be used as justification for grant requests and for making constructive changes to the Senior Health Services program.

Lisa will begin the second leg of the Outreach Program at the Clark House. She will meet with Kathy Koplow, Manager at the Clark House, to talk about the possibility of a health fair to meet and greet the residents and about having the presence of a nurse on a regular basis to meet with the residents. Lisa was approached last week by a UMass faculty member in the School of Nursing about working with her and 8 senior level nursing students this semester in a community clinical course. The plan would be to have some of the students at the Senior Center. The Clark House could be an excellent way of incorporating the students into that program.

Lisa informed us that she just completed the second round of the *Aging Together* workshop – the support group of elders that meets for 6 weeks to talk about their personal experiences with aging. It has been a wonderful experience and Lisa hopes to do it again.

Emergency Funds Update:

Maura reported that she gave a loan to one woman for her propane fuel bill. She is also working with an elderly couple to help them pay off their electric heat bill. The \$10,000 in the Emergency Relief Fund is money from Amherst College, not the Friends. The sub-committee will meet to discuss any changes in the guidelines. At present the maximum amount loaned out is \$200. Maura has arranged for flexible loan payment plans. No interest is applied. If someone is unable to repay the loan the debt is forgiven. She is informing agencies that work with elders about the fund and has asked HVES to let care advisors know about the fund.

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Master Plan:

Rosemary reported that the Planning Board will hold a public forum on the Master Plan on December 10 at 7:00 PM at Bangs. They want to get the final public input to guide them in their decision to accept the Master Plan. Feedback is welcome at the meeting or in writing through the end of January. The Master Plan is available on the Town website. Hard copies are available at the Jones Library in the Reference room or at Town Hall.

Friends/COA Budget Update:

Nancy said that the budget issues are really up in the air until the Governor presents the state budget in January. She explained the different accounts that the Senior Center works with. Over the years the Senior Center has accumulated a few 'gifts accounts'. Those accounts are not Town money.

- 1) Wellness Grants- \$1000 is set aside and used for health clinic appointments for low-income elders.
- 2) Senior Health Services--Money from donations including the \$10,000 annual gift for Senior Health Services and the grant money from the Amherst Club and Cooley Dickinson Hospital.
- 3) Van Account – money supplied by Travel Club used to pay the driver, gasoline & van expenses.
- 4) Program Account – Many years ago \$9,000 was given to Barbara Slovin by a community volunteer to help with whatever program needs occur. Nancy used \$2400 from this account to help pay for *MySeniorCenter*.
- 5) Emergency Funds--Amherst College money recently donated to help those in need.

Ad Hoc survey Committee:

Joel reported that David will no longer chair the committee. Sandra Lapollo, who was in charge of the Chicopee survey, will be the new chair. The members agreed unanimously that the 2010 survey is such an important document that it should be done professionally. They will pursue 2 professional groups and report back to the COA in February. Cost and funding will be a big issue if professionals do the survey.

Nancy commented that the report should be done before 2010 because it will demonstrate the need for how vital our services are.

Dan said that Jeanne Ryan of CDH/VNA is working with a group that is moving ahead with a similar survey. It would seem reasonable to collaborate with that group rather than duplicate efforts. The committee will pursue that possibility.

Highland Valley Elder Services:

Barbara went to the Nutrition Program and was informed that HVES will no longer supply paper supplies for the lunch program. The Senior Center will supply what is needed.

Joan commented on Community Choices. The 154-page report is on the Town web. The future for revenues for the Town looks bleak. The budget gap keeps growing over the next 5 years. We do not have the money to cover basic services. Community participation in the meetings was disappointing. Only 437 people responded to their survey.

The COA meeting adjourned at 10:08 AM.

The next meeting of the COA will be held February 5, 2009 at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary

The approved minutes of the November 6, 2008 were delivered to the Select Board office to be filed.